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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Jean Martin Charcot (1825–93) and Jean Baptiste Charcot (1867–1936)

Jean Martin Charcot spent more than 30 years of his career at the Salpêtrière and established the great school of neurology there. Charcot's interest in neurology was slow to evolve. He was inspired largely by his contemporary, Duchenne. Charcot was also a contemporary of Broca. Freud was among his pupils. Charcot's famous lessons dealt with all matters of neurological importance, including cerebral localisation in 1875 and 1876. Early in his career he also made several contributions to general medicine. His particular interests included hysteria and hypnotism.

Charcot convincingly demonstrated cortical motor centres in humans. He delineated the brain's vascular supply and with his intern Charles Bouchard described military aneurysms. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, which he also described, is still referred to as Charcot's disease in many parts of the world. He noted that in infantile paralysis the spinal lesions were limited to the anterior horns of the grey matter. With Marie he described the peroneal form of muscular atrophy. He had clear views on the differentiation of hysteria from epilepsy, neurosis from psychoses, and multiple sclerosis from paralyse agitante. Charcot created the term Parkinson's disease (*la maladie de Parkinson*). Charcot also focused considerable attention on differentiating the tremor displayed by patients with Parkinson's disease from that of patients with multiple sclerosis. In his analyses of head tremor he asked patients to wear a lightweight wand attached to a head band to magnify the tremor. To improve evaluation in his gait laboratory the patients walked on paper after dipping their feet in ink. He

described locomotor ataxia, gastric crises, and the joint lesions of syphilis. In 1960 France issued a stamp picturing Charcot and the Salpêtrière (Gibbons 1492, Scott B344).

His son, Jean Baptiste Charcot, was the illustrious son of an illustrious father. He graduated as a physician from the University of Paris in 1895 and served as house physician to his father at the Salpêtrière before moving to the Pasteur institute. In 1901 he deserted medicine to become an Arctic and Antarctic explorer sailing in his famous polar ship *Pourquoi pas?* ("Why not?"). He perished tragically in a gale off northern Iceland in 1936. Charcot Island in Antarctica was named by him in honour of his father. He has also been philatelically honoured as an Arctic and Antarctic explorer. This is one of the few instances of father and son, both physicians, receiving postal recognition for quite different achievements. Jean Baptiste Charcot and the *Pourquoi pas?* are shown here on a stamp of the French Southern and Antarctic Territories issued in 1961 on the 25th anniversary of his disappearance (Stanley Gibbons 24, Scott 21).

There have been at least two biographies written about J M Charcot, one of the founders of neurology. They are Guillemin G. *J-M Charcot: his life-his work* (translated by P Bailey) London: Pitman Medical Publishing Company, (1959) (In French: *JM Charcot, sa vie-sa oeuvre*. Paris: Masson, 1955) and Goetz CG, Bonduelle M, Gelfand T. *Charcot. Constructing neurology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

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